

# Kindness is something we have in abundance

by Mark Pavilons

Kindness in words creates confidence. Kindness in thinking creates profoundness. Kindness in giving creates love. Lao Tzu

We are at a tipping point in society today.

After years of doom and gloom, and lingering pain, we need a guiding light, a ray of sunshine.

Mental health issues are at an all-time high among all age groups. And so is personal debt.

There are more awful soundbites each day than good news stories.

Often, it's hard to help ourselves. But that shouldn't stop us from helping others.

A kind word, gesture, smile and nod may make someone's day. It could mean all the difference in the world.

The other day I received an anonymous photo in the mail. It was a picture of a sign in the shape of a penguin, at a lakeside park. On the penguin it read: Smiling is contagious, send a smile out into the world today!

It worked. I smiled. Okay, I was a little surprised, but I can understand and fully appreciate the gesture.

It's meaningful on several levels. Someone took the time to print off the photo, stick it in an oversized envelope and drop it in the mail.

That's effort! And for that I thank you, whoever you are. Right back at you!

We refer to these as random acts of kindness, but I'd like to encourage their use, so they're no longer random, but become part of our everyday routine.

I come across dozens of cute and meaningful sayings on the Internet each day. Some are great, and others I jot down, and keep a growing list. Some I used here on this page in the paper. They're meant to not only evoke thought, but perhaps make someone smile. And boy do we need more of those.

I read one of those quotes recently that says you should compliment someone if you see something special in them.

I often tell total strangers they sport a cool look or have fantastic hair or tattoos. Self-expression is wonderful and if it makes me smile, I like to tell them.

My wife finds my conversations with strangers a bit odd, but hey, I'm just sharing the warmth.

I've been watching videos online recently that depict purposeful acts of kindness. They range from helping the homeless to rewarding kindness. Many are from social influencers who raise money from followers and pass it along to those who need it most.

I'm amazed at how gestures, even tiny ones, are received with wide eyes, smiles and joy. A \$5 donation to a Nigerian labourer is welcomed with bright eyes, smiles and hugs. Giving strangers gift cards and covering people's groceries is met with confusion, then amazement, then total appreciation.

Some YouTubers ask strangers what makes them happy or what message they would like to share with the world. Many tell the

viewers to be kind, compassionate and share love. Many of the homeless recipients turn around and share their new-found bounty with another. They praise the Lord.

And many are just thankful that someone stopped to say hello, to recognize their very existence.

That's both sad and great at the same time.

Some online influencers I follow just ask people if they can sit down and chat. They're almost always welcome to join and share.

We don't need free laptops or \$100 bills to feel good. While helpful, we don't require windfalls to be grateful or feel special.

Of course, there are those who are a bit apprehensive when strangers approach. Good Samaritans are sometimes viewed with a suspecting glance.

I say to hell with it. Cut through the clouds and negativity and spread some joy.

My ultimate desire, should I win the lottery or become wealthy, is to go on a mission, and help everyone I encounter. From handing out ridiculous tips to fast food employees to building tiny homes for the homeless, I'd want to help.

For those who are approaching, or in, retirement, they need something to do. After working our entire lives, what's next?

Yes, some of us have to continue working. Others volunteer to fill the hours. Some are lucky enough to stretch their long legs on sandy beaches.

But if you're lucky enough, and in good health, to enjoy a long retirement, why not give back?

As I mentioned, if I was blessed with mountains cash, I'd be quick to set up a foundation of some sort and get to work spreading goodwill here at home and abroad. I'd form a team of like-minded adults and youth and create another avenue of change.

There's no glamour in this, or recognition. I see it as a civic duty, a responsibility to others. When I see how others live and struggle in horrible conditions, it breaks my heart. When I know that a pair of shoes is worth more than a car, I am motivated to pitch in.

I accompanied my son on a school mission to the Dominican a few years back, assisting Haitian field workers. I didn't necessarily feel sorry for them, but I wanted to run into those very fields, roll up my sleeves and work alongside them. Admittedly, I wouldn't last more than an hour in those conditions.

The need may be huge, even overwhelming. But it's not insurmountable or out of our reach.

There are so many ways to help.

And it all starts with sending a smile out into the world!